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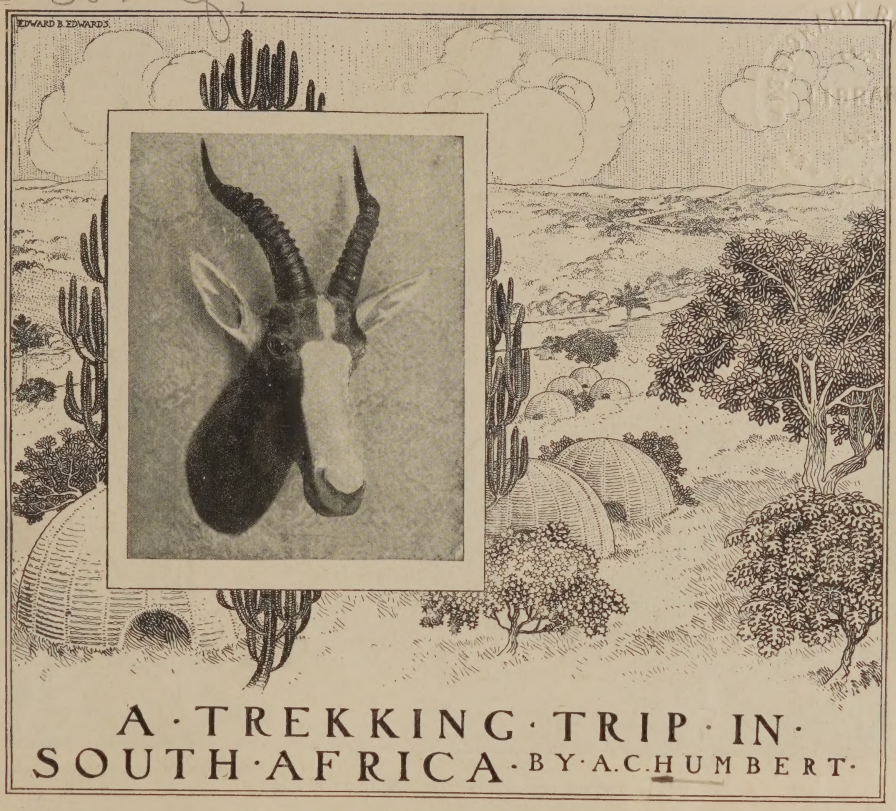
Humbert, A. C.



A·TREKKING·TRIP·IN·SOUTH·AFRICA·BY·A.C.HUMBERT·

ON the 12th day of March I was seated on the veranda of my house at Rondebusch, a suburb of Cape Town, when my boy David handed me a letter, which contained an invitation from a friend asking me to join him on a trekking trip through the Caledon district. I was to meet him at Caledon, a town one hundred miles distant, prepared to spend a month camping along the southern coast of Africa. He had obtained permission from Messrs. Kingsmill and Christian to shoot over a range known as Ratel River, which abounds with game.

After procuring a shooting license I set out on my journey to Caledon, leaving Cape Town by the Cape Colony Railroad. In four hours I reached Sir Lowrie's Pass, the terminus of a branch of this road, situated twenty miles west of the Cape of Good Hope.

I proceeded by the stage which carries the mail, and soon began ascending a steep mountain. The road wound around rocky cliffs, and when we reached the summit we had an impressive view of Simon's Bay, which lay at our feet, with the sun reflecting from its surface. The African sky at this season is often spotted with wind-clouds, which glow in the sunlight, and at sunrise and sunset produce effects more beautiful than I have ever seen in the Sierra Nevada or Rocky Mountains.

Our first stopping-place was Howe Hook, a farm half-way between Sir Lowrie's Pass and Caledon, where we changed horses. The road to Caledon proceeded through deep cañons, with mountains on either side rising abruptly to the height of eight hundred feet. Everywhere along the horizon I could see mountain ranges with bold peaks standing out against the sky. Far to the right glimpses of the sandy coast added variety to the landscape.

After a long and dusty drive of fifty miles we came in sight of Caledon. The

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"I WHIPPED IT ROUND HER BEFORE SHE KNEW."

on one knee, but there was that infernal Frenchman picking the kamanjeh and watching me with one blasé eye; but I bowed my head loyally as Tancred might have done.

She unfastened it deftly, and held it out toward me with a half-protesting hand; but she said, softly, with a half-averted face, "Is there but one?"

"I swear to you," I replied, almost as softly, "that there never was, and never shall be, but one."

Then she put it back around her waist, and without a word turned her face to the wall.

I walked mechanically to the mouth of the cave, without knowing exactly what I was doing. I felt sorry for the Frenchman, and wanted to slap him on the back. Even one's soul has to take breath after long storms. I thought of Saul, for a great light seemed to shine upon me, and there through the murky atmosphere the afternoon sun had shot a golden shaft across the abyss below from the defiles of Ain Jady, and the Dead Sea was beginning to dance with a golden joy.

Bel Amish came softly up to me.

"Rabbi," I said, "it was a bad storm."

"Yes," he replied; "but it has blown some of the sand out of my son's eyes."

And for weeks afterwards I felt that to be true, for, sitting on the stone balcony there at the pension, I said to Em one morning,

"Do you know, my dear, that that whole story of the Exodus may be a parable to teach us that men take forty years to do what God would do for them in forty days!"

She was looking demurely over at the sunlit Dome of Omar.

"I am convinced," she said, "that the doves do not fly over the Temple Area—they fly round it."

"Yes," I answered, humbly, "they probably do, but how long one has to watch them to find it out!"

road approaching the town was lined with small trees, which looked much out of place planted amongst rocks and rhinoceros-bushes. Here, as in all South African towns, the churches attract one's attention from their size and prominent location. The stage stopped in front of the Alexandra Hotel, a two-story house with two verandas, one above the other. Here my friends greeted me with the information that we would start the next day to trek for Ratel River.

THE HOUSE AT RONDEBUSCH.

The following morning our baggage and the necessary provisions were roped on the rack along the sides of a large wagon, which was standing in front of the hotel. At one o'clock the driver cracked his long whip and the ten mules started on a trot. As we passed out of the little town of Caledon the old Dutch inhabitants congregated along our route to see us off. Our two dogs, Clara and Point, were chained in a Cape cart which followed close behind. This cart we often used to make trips into the veldt, and found it a very necessary addition to the large unwieldy mule-wagon.

After we had trekked four hours we reached Goudini's Farm, and decided to camp there. As our tents had not arrived from Cape Town when we set out, we spent our first night in the veldt huddled together under a sheet of canvas, which we fastened from the wheels of the large wagon to the ground.

A VIEW IN CALEDON.

Soon after breakfast the ten mules were inspanned, and we were once more trekking towards Ratel River. We gave the dogs a chance to work for partridges along the road, and the hills resounded with the echoes of our guns. Clara, in her anxiety to outdo Point, often flushed a covey, and each time had to be punished.

At noon we reached the old Dutch house on the De Kock Farm. There is a large vineyard in

front of it, and when you have added a few shade trees you have the picture of a typical South African farm. The country about was hilly and covered with rhinoceros-bush, which only grows on dry soil where irrigation is impossible. The soil in this district is not very fertile; the farmers, who are few and far between, cultivate chiefly the grape. They plant enough tobacco for their own use, and at the end of the rainy season sow their crops. The range is only fitted for sheep, and these are raised in considerable numbers. Along the waterways where the soil is good, any kind of fruit trees will thrive, especially the fig.

From this point the road became very sandy. Our ten mules hauled our wagon with great difficulty, and progress was slow and irksome. In order to help the mules out of sandy spots in the road, we were sometimes forced to resort to shovels. In our driver's anxiety to keep the wagon moving he would wind his big lash quite around the poor beasts; and he pleaded with them in such personal terms that I soon became familiar with their names. We arrived at Papies Flay in the evening and camped for the night.

OUR CAMP.

The tents had arrived in the mean time, and were soon pitched in a circle; the stretchers were arranged, blankets were unfolded, and we supped on partridges, tea, and toast.

Our neighbor at this camp was the sheep king of this district, a Mr. Vreel, one of whose farms is the celebrated Franz Kraal, situated opposite Danger Point Light-house. We wished to get leave to shoot over as much of the southern coast as possible, and my friends selected me to call upon him. The Cape cart was ready, and bundling the two dogs under the seat, I set out. From the top of the last hill his farm-house came in view. With the help of my field-glasses I saw my first flock of ostriches; they were feeding in a large enclosure, heedless of the men who were at work repairing fences and building ditches close by.

On meeting Mr. Vreel I touched cautiously upon my mission. To my astonishment, he not only gave us full right to shoot over his land, but offered to put his house and servants at Franz Kraal entirely at our disposal. Coffee was served, as is customary among the Dutch inhabitants, and we were soon strolling about the farm.

We spent some time admiring the thirty ostriches. They stepped proudly around, as though conscious of the splendor of their plumes. Mr. Vreel plucked me two feathers from a big cock bird, warning me at the same time to keep very near the gate. Though these ostriches are quite tame, two or three of them occasionally become ugly with strangers. At such times their legs turn pink, and it is dangerous to approach them. They strike violently with their feet, and the only way to protect one's self is to drop flat on the ground. Our mule-wagon had long since trekked past this farm, and after a hearty handshaking I bade Mr. Vreel good-by. It is impossible for me to find words to express my feelings at the kind reception tendered me.

My friends had outspanned at a mission station at a primitive native village, called Elim, and were awaiting my ar-

THE TREKKING WAGON.

rival anxiously. I caught sight of the wagon on the outskirt of the village, and drove rapidly through it. The natives, whose curiosity had been aroused by the mule-wagon, ran out of their huts in the endeavor to see me pass.

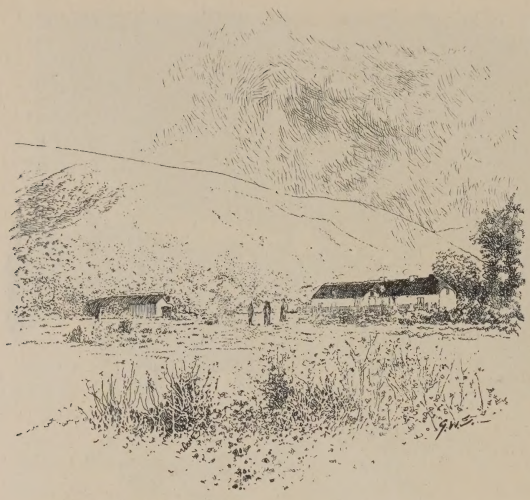
Elim was founded years ago by the Moravians. The length of time during which the missionaries have been working in Cape Colony is indicated by the fact that the water-mill at Gnadedal was built in 1796. The missions own the land, and have built the huts in which the natives live, receiving nominal rents for them. The children are educated in the mission schools. The only building of any size is the church, which stands prominently in a square.

We left this station soon after dinner, and reached Ratel River Farm at five o'clock. The road had become even more sandy. As we neared the ocean our wheels would sink up to the hubs, and we had to dig them out repeatedly. After descending the last hill we trekked for three miles over a flat country which was on a level with the sea.

At the farm-house the foreman met us, offered the use of the saddle-horses, and helped us to find a suitable camp. We decided on a level spot not far from the large farm-house, and pitched our three tents in line. That evening we spent planning our first day's hunt, and preparing our guns for an early start.

The sun had hardly risen above the horizon the next morning when I woke up to the fact that one of my friends had already been out on the downs and shot a vlok-bok with his Mannlicher rifle. This bok stood about two feet high, was of reddish color, and had two small straight horns three inches long. His legs were long, and the body slender and very shapely.

Soon after breakfast, while my friends went with their dogs after partridges and pheasants, I hunted the downs for small antelope. The soil along my path was very sandy, covered with brush, which only grew to the height of from two to three feet. It was not difficult to find game-paths, which led in all directions, and which had been used by generations of antelope. I had not gone more than a thousand yards when a vlok-bok came in sight. By careful stalking, and by keeping behind the tallest bushes in my path, I approached within a hundred yards. I missed him, and he stood as



FRANZ KRAAL.

if undecided which way to run, giving me another opportunity. This time the bullet struck the shoulder, and turning a number of somersaults, he fell dead.

I left his body on a conspicuous tree and wound my way along slowly until, reaching a slight elevation, I saw a small bok feeding on the opposite side of a hollow, at a distance of three hundred yards. Lying flat on the ground, and raising my sights, I fired. The bullet had scarcely left the muzzle of my gun when the downs suddenly looked like a huge zoological garden; boks, all of the small varieties, jumped out of their hiding-places and ran in every direction, like a lot of big jack-rabbits, some of them trotting, others jumping high up in the air to clear any bushes that might lie in their path of flight. It never occurred to me to reload my gun.

My boy led me in pursuit of the bok I had wounded, and after running fully a mile over bushes and through the sand, finally captured him on the beach. I was out of breath, and as I sat down to rest by my game I could not help admiring it. It was somewhat heavier than the vlok-bok, and its horns, though of the same general character, grew closer together, and were more slantingly set on its head. It proved to be of a variety called duyker-bok, which is very numerous in these parts. When startled, their bounding flight resembles a series of dives. From this fact they have received the name duyker, which means, in Dutch, diver, or ducker.

The coast along this portion of Africa, which is all sand, with frequent inlets, looks as if it had been heaped up by the ocean into hillocks. It is covered with a growth of bushes, which in some places I found impassable.

My boy shouldered the duyker-bok and followed me back. We reached camp after a smart walk of two hours, picking up my other prize on the way. My friends soon appeared with a bag of six pheasants and eleven partridges. They also brought a puff-adder, a most repulsive reptile. He was four feet long, and had a large flat head. Two long fangs grew from his upper jaw, and upon close observation we discovered the hole through which the poison is ejected. This snake is one of the most poisonous in Africa. Though his heavy body makes him slow to move, he strikes quickly, usually sidewise, and sometimes throws himself backward to a distance greater than his own length. Our specimen had been discovered by the little Dutch boy, who was picking up the birds my friends had brought down. He jumped up in the air as if shot, and called out, "Master, slit slange," which means, "Master, shoot the snake." He had had a very narrow escape, for he was barefoot, and his legs were entirely unprotected. A load of bird-shot soon put an end to this reptile, and he was brought into camp for my inspection.

We had all been warned against the snakes which infest the coast, and especially the black cobra, against which the leather leggings with which we had provided ourselves would hardly have saved us. The cobra is somewhat longer and more

BOUNTE-BOK.

A REPRESENTATIVE SOUTH-AFRICAN FAMILY.

agile than the puff-adder, and is very venomous. These two species cause deaths every year among the inhabitants of this district, and are very much feared.

Some weeks later, while hunting rhe-bok on the Oaks Farm, some ten miles from the town of Caledon, I was told of a little girl who, a few days previous to my arrival, had met her death from the bite of a black cobra. She had started from the house to pick some fruit in the garden, and climbing over a low stone wall, stepped on a cobra. The reptile struck her just above the ankle. Running back to the house, she told her mother that she had been bitten, and felt as if she were on fire. The usual remedy of whiskey had no effect. In twenty minutes she began to turn black, and in three-quarters of an hour died in convulsions.

After dinner we were visited by the Dutch inhabitants of this rural district in gala attire. They had heard that a photographer had come to the coast. We gave up the afternoon to grouping them.

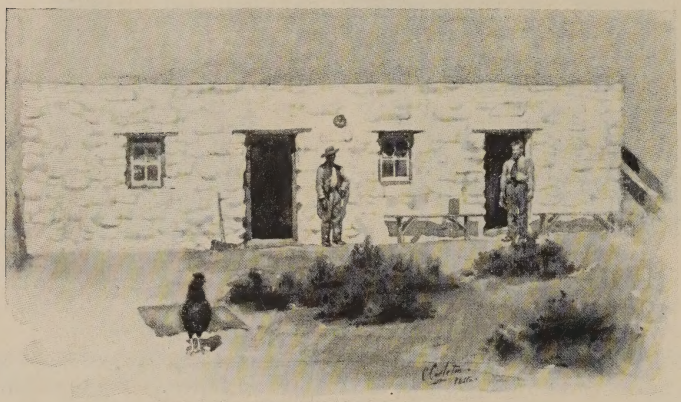
At this camp the ostriches were so tame that they frequently entered our tents, and with their bills upset all our belongings. My friend missed two of his silver razors, and to this day accuses an ostrich which had been seen in his tent.

The weather so far had favored us; not a drop of rain had fallen. We therefore decided to drive over in the Cape cart to Bredarsdorf, the most southerly settlement in Africa, distant thirty miles in a southeasterly direction along the coast. Early the next morning two mules were hitched up to the cart, with a pair of horses as leaders. The country we passed through was deserted. The ground was very much in need of water, and very barren; the soil was sandy, and in some places rocky. We came in sight of Bredarsdorf rounding a small hill. The houses were one story high, and covered with the thatched roofs which have proved the best protection against the hot rays of the sun. The inhabitants are mostly of Dutch origin. The Commercial Hotel was the largest building in the town, with the exception of the church. We were given rooms on the first floor, opening on a large veranda. Here we spent the evening chatting with the proprietor, who proved very entertaining. He treated us to oysters, which were fresh from Cape Agulhas, the shells of which were very large, and the meat thin and tasteless.

On the following morning our party stopped about an hour's drive from town at the farm of a Mr. Albertaine, where the

bounte-bok, a nearly extinct species, is preserved under fence by the government. I was under the impression that it was the same species as the bless-bok, which is still found in large numbers further north. Mr. Albertaine explained the difference, and I decided to take a specimen back with me. As the Cape cart entered the pasture gates, Mr. Albertaine stood up and looked over the veldt to locate a bunch, while I sat on the tail of the cart with my rifle, my feet swinging out behind. The manner in which these boks are hunted is peculiar. When running, they never deviate from their course; it is said that they will even run over you if you get in their way. When a bunch is sighted the horses are put on the dead run, in the endeavor to approach as near as possible to the course of their flight. When we had driven some distance in this ten-mile pasture we saw, far off to our right, a bunch numbering about fifteen. They had not been startled, and we approached them cautiously. When within four hundred yards we started the horses on a dead run. Presently the cart came to a halt, and jumping off, I aimed a little in advance of an old bok that was bringing up the rear. He quickly veered around, and ran back at full speed. I heard a voice from the Cape cart saying, "Hard hit, my boy." We found the bullet had struck him just back of the shoulder, and had severed the large artery.

After bidding Mr. Albertaine a hearty farewell, our primitive four-in-hand started at a brisk trot toward Ratel River camp. The sun was only two hours high, and we had thirty miles to drive. Our driver said he knew the road, so with all confidence we trusted to him. The night soon closed in on us, as there is no twilight in these parts, and after driving four hours we were convinced that we had chosen the wrong road. Still, on we travelled in darkness, trying to locate some familiar object. At last hundreds of lights came in view. The driver then confided to us that we were on the wrong road. We were back in Elim, the mission station.



THE HOUSE ON DYER'S ISLAND.

Refreshed with a hot cup of coffee, we harnessed up four fresh horses, and drove rapidly to our camp, that was distant twelve miles. At times the wheels of the cart would drop into holes, and all hands clung on, expecting at any moment to land out on the veldt. We reached camp at one in the morning, tired out after a drive of forty-five miles over rough and hilly roads.

In the morning I saw an ostrich half a mile away, walking towards me. It was an ugly male bird which the foreman had turned into a large enclosure, where he was preserving some red-winged partridges, in order to prevent any one from entering. We had fortunately been cautioned to keep clear of this bird, and waited on the outside of the fence. It trotted towards us, and nearing the wire, lowered its head flat on its back, and stood within a few feet of us, with outstretched wings.

The next morning, when my friend yelled out for us to get up, our men were carrying boxes and bags, and in half an hour tents were being pulled up, and tent-pins gathered and strung on the wagon rack. After a good cup of tea and biscuits we were off again, trekking for Franz Kraal, a beautiful farm located fifteen miles from here, and opposite Danger Point Light-house.

PENGUINS ON DYER'S ISLAND.

Birds were very plentiful along the road; my friends had good sport. The wagon always halted when a covey was seen, and the dogs were working much better than at the beginning of the trip.

At some of the houses we passed women were rolling tobacco leaves into round rolls, such as the Dutch smoke in clay pipes. The road was very sandy, necessitating frequent stoppages to rest the mules. We outspanned for dinner at Mr. Vanderbile's farm. The buildings were comfortable and well kept; large trees shaded the veranda of his house.

That afternoon coveys of pheasants ran into the bushes to hide from us; but as we had not permission to shoot on Mr. Vanderbile's lands we could only look at them with longing eyes. As the mules were becoming very tired and needed continual urging, I ran along the spans and slapped an old mule with the palm of my hand. Instead of jumping into her collar, she let both heels fly right in the air, barely missing me. This cooled my ardor, and they received their urging thereafter with a long whip and at a safe distance. We finally ascended the last hill, and found ourselves in full view of Franz Kraal, and overlooking the coast for many miles. Here we camped, at an altitude of four hundred feet above the sea. The range of mountains near which Franz Kraal is located extends almost into the sea. From the top of this range one may obtain the best view of the southern coast. Looking towards the east, on a very clear day, one sees Cape Agulhas, and westerly the Cape of Good Hope.

The Cape Colony government had given us permission to visit Dyer's Island, a small rocky island just visible seven miles at sea. Early one morning the keeper appeared with six followers and rowed us out. We found the rocks covered with penguins. Their movements were very awkward as they waddled about to make room for us to pass, but they were so tame that they would allow the keeper to handle them. Some were sitting on their nests, others sunning themselves, while others swam out into the water. These birds make their home on the island, and swim daily for their food—mainly fish; they are credited with covering many miles when they are procuring food for their young.

The keeper next rowed us to a still smaller island, where hundreds of seals

SEALS ON DYER'S ISLAND.

were sunning themselves on the rocks. Before approaching too near them I took my position in the bow, in an attempt to photograph them as they dived from the rocks. Our boat was soon surrounded with them, as they rose out of the water and looked at us with their large eyes, as if to say, "What business have you here?"

I asked the keeper to let me shoot one as a specimen, but he refused, and said his orders from the government were very strict, the season had closed, and he was to report any one found shooting them. It is rather significant to note how carefully the English colonies are preserving their seals, and how their brethren in Canada are endeavoring to exterminate ours.

We returned to our camp with the help of a southwest wind. It overlooked the ocean, and commanded a beautiful view.

The mountains back of the house were the home of large troops of baboons. Some of them are four feet high, with long arms, and climb to the very highest peaks. Every troop has sentinels perched on rocks to warn them of approaching danger. I found it very difficult to get near them. They feed on roots and insects, and I frequently saw large bunches of grass torn up by the roots, and bowlders weighing a hundred pounds which they had rolled over in their attempts to find food. The shooting on this range was ideal; birds were very plentiful—the coveys were large; the boks, including vlok-, gras-, duyker-, and rheboks, were numerous. The first three varieties made their home on the downs, while the last kept entirely to the hills, thus affording us a variety of hunting that we found at no other place. The weather could not have been finer. With the exception of one or two slight showers, that never lasted long enough to interfere with our pleasures, no rain had fallen.

On the 10th of April we trekked back to Caledon, stopping on the way when the mules needed rest. The second day of our trip came to an end, and we were all once more at the Alexandra Hotel.

While in Caledon I frequently took the baths, which are very beneficial to rheumatic or gouty people. The springs are on the mountain-side, and the water bubbles up out of the black ground at a temperature of 100°. It contains iron and other ingredients, and is conducted in iron pipes to the bath-house. Invalids come here in considerable numbers from all parts of Africa to find a new lease of life.